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This listing of claims replaces the prior listing of claims.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-19 (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A system for enclosing at least one semi-solid or solid product in a covering material, comprising:

[[an]] a plurality of interchangeable elongate product chutes, each chute having a generally planar floor and an outer wall with defining opposing receiving and discharge end portions and an interior cavity extending therethrough, and wherein at least some of the cavities have cavity having a non-circular cross-sectional shape with a , wherein the chute further comprises a flared entry segment with a first cross-sectional area that tapers into an adjacent downstream portion to have a smaller second cross-sectional area thereat, and wherein the elongate product chutes comprise[[s]] a handle extending above a generally medial location of an upper portion of the outer wall;

a mounting frame configured to releaseably hold one of the interchangeable chutes such that each chute has substantially the same axially extending centerline when mounted on the mounting frame;

a clipper mechanism disposed downstream of the mounted product chute, the clipper mechanism configured to apply at least one clip to a covering material that resides over and encloses a product discharged from the product chute; and

a sleeve of netting held over the outer wall of the mounted product chute downstream of the handle.

Claim 21 (Canceled)

22. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the cavity has a generally pentagonal cross-sectional shape.

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23. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the cavity cross-sectional shape comprises an upper triangular portion.

24. (Original) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the cavity cross-sectional shape is generally oval.

25. (Original) A system according to Claim 24, wherein the outer wall defines the oval shape and comprises opposing generally semicircular sides that merge into opposing generally planar upper and lower portions.

26. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the product chute outer wall has a cross-sectional shape with a generally curvilinear upper portion that terminates into the lower generally planar floor.

27. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the product chute outer wall has cross-sectional shape with an upper circular shape that defines a major portion of the shape and is truncated by the generally planar floor.

28. (Original) A system according to Claim 20, wherein a discharge end of the product chute has an angular cross section when viewed from the side so that a length of an upper portion of the product chute is less than a length of a lower portion of the product chute.

Claim 29 (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the sleeve of netting material is configured to be held in tension and extends a distance beyond a discharge end of the chute during operative use.

31. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, further comprising a mounting bracket attached to each product chute and releasably attachable to the mounting frame, the wherein at least one of the mounting brackets has a mounting

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bracket having a lowermost generally planar substantially horizontal mounting platform and an opposing upper portion that is attached to a bottom of the respective product chute, and wherein at least a different one of the mounting brackets for the interchangeable product chutes has a different configuration.

32. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, each product chute further comprising a mounting bracket, wherein at least one of product chute the mounting brackets has having a generally concave transversely extending contoured recess configured to receive a lower bottom portion of the product chute therein, and wherein at least another one of the product chute mounting brackets has an upstanding segment with a planar substantially horizontal upper portion that holds the lower portion of the product chute.

33. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 32, wherein the contoured recess mounting bracket configuration has is an angled bracket with the contoured recess merging into a first downwardly extending generally planar vertical segment that, in turn merges into an axially extending generally planar horizontal segment.

34. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, each of the product chutes further comprising a respective mounting bracket affixed to the product chute, wherein the mounting bracket comprises a sensor that cooperates with a component on a mounting frame to inhibit operation when the chute is not in proper operative position.

Claim 35 (Canceled)

36. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the flared entry segment of at least some of the product chutes define[[s]] a gap space proximate to and upstream of the floor of a the primary body portion of the mounted product chute.

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Claim 37 (Canceled)

38. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, wherein at least one of the product chute interior cavities ~~avity~~ has a cross-sectional profile that is sized and configured to snugly receive and/or compress a product as the product moves along the length thereof.

39. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the mounted product chute is held substantially horizontal during operation.

40. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 20, wherein the mounted product chute is held tilted relative to horizontal during operation.

41. (Currently Amended) A method of packaging an object or objects in netting, comprising:

pushing at least one object through a first product chute having a floor and a non-circular cross-sectional shape and an axially extending centerline, wherein the chute comprises a primary body and a flared entry portion with a first cross-sectional area that tapers into an adjacent downstream portion proximate the primary body to have a smaller second cross-sectional area thereat;

pulling netting material downstream of the product chute off of an exterior surface of the product chute to automatically enclose the object in the netting material as the object exits the product chute; then

applying at least one clip to the netting material to secure the object in the netting material using an automated or semi-automated clipper; and

~~automatically sensing whether the product chute is in position to thereby inhibit operation when the chute is not in proper operative position;~~

replacing the first product chute with a second product chute having a different cross sectional shape and/or size such that the second product chute is placed in cooperating alignment with the clipper about an axially extending centerline that substantially coincides with that of the first product chute.

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42. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the netting material comprises a sleeve of elastic netting material, the method further comprising automatically electronically inhibiting operation when the first or second chute is not in proper operative position.

43. (Original) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the netting material comprises netting material that is elastically isotropic to thereby be stretchable in an axial direction and in a direction that is substantially orthogonal thereto.

44. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first chute has a generally planar floor.

45. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 44, wherein the first chute has a substantially planar floor.

Claim 46 (Canceled)

47. (Withdrawn) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first chute cavity has a generally pentagonal cross-sectional shape.

48. (Withdrawn) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first chute cavity cross-sectional shape comprises an upper substantially triangular portion.

49. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first chute cavity cross-sectional shape is generally oval.

50. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 49, wherein the first product chute is configured with at least one wall that defines the oval and comprises opposing semicircular sides that merge into opposing generally planar upper and lower portions.

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51. (Withdrawn) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first product chute has an outer wall with a cross-sectional shape having a generally curvilinear upper portion that terminates into a generally planar lower floor portion.

52. (Withdrawn) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the first product chute has an upper circular cross-sectional shape that is truncated by a generally planar floor.

53. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 41, wherein a discharge end of the first product chute has an angular cross section when viewed from the side so that a length of an upper portion of the product chute is less than a length of a lower portion of the product chute.

54. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 41, further comprising placing a sleeve of netting material over the first and second product chute before mounting the selected chute to a system frame and stretching the sleeve so that it is in tension in at least the axial direction and extends a distance beyond a discharge end of the respective chute prior to the pulling and/or applying step.

55. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 54, wherein the first product chute comprises a mounting bracket with a transversely extending generally concave recess having a contour that generally matches that of a bottom portion of the product chute, further comprising releaseably mounting the mounting bracket and product chute to a mounting frame after inserting the sleeve of material thereon.

Claim 56 (Canceled).

57. (Original) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the object is a meat product.

58. (Original) A method according to Claim 57, wherein the meat product is a ham.

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59. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 57, wherein the meat product comprises turkey held in a mold.

Claims 60-61 (Canceled)

62. (Currently Amended) A system for enclosing at least one semi-solid or solid product in a covering material, comprising:

an a plurality of interchangeable elongate product chutes, each respective chute having a different size and/or shape, having a generally planar floor and an outer wall, defining opposing receiving and discharge end portions and an interior generally straight cavity extending therethrough, with the chute cavities having the cavity having a non-circular cross-sectional shape;

a mounting bracket attached to each respective the product chute, and wherein each the respective product chute mounting bracket is individually releasably mountable mounted to a frame that holds the mounted product chute in alignment with a clipper mechanism during operation such that each mounted product chute has a substantially common axially extending centerline; and

a clipper mechanism disposed downstream of the product chute, the clipper mechanism configured to apply at least one clip to a covering material that resides over and encloses a product discharged from the mounted product chute, wherein the mounting bracket comprises a sensor that cooperates with a component on a mounting frame to inhibit operation when the chute is not in proper operative position.

Claim 63 (Canceled)

64. (Currently Amended) A system according to Claim 62, wherein the respective mounting brackets have netting/product chute assembly comprising:

a netting chute with an outer wall defining an interior cavity extending therethrough, the outer wall including an exterior surface adapted to hold netting thereon, the cavity having a non-circular cross-section; and

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~~a mounting bracket having~~ a transversely extending contoured generally concave recess configured to releasably receive a lower portion of the respective product chute therein.

65. (Currently Amended) A system netting/product chute assembly according to Claim 64, wherein the respective mounting brackets ~~[[has]]~~ have a generally planar upwardly extending medial portion that merges into the contoured recess at a top portion thereof and merges into a planar substantially horizontal mounting platform at a lower portion thereof.

66. (Currently Amended) A system netting/product chute assembly according to Claim 64, wherein the mounting bracket comprises an electronic component a sensor that cooperates with an electronic component on the ~~a~~-mounting frame that, in position on the mounting frame, is configured to inhibit operation when the mounted the chute is not in proper operative position.

67. (New) A method of packaging products in netting using a packaging system, comprising:

releasably mounting a selected one of a plurality of interchangeable product chutes to a common system mounting frame, at least some of the plurality of interchangeable product chutes having different configurations from the others; and
aligning the selected product chute with a clipper mechanism located downstream of the mounted product chute such that, when mounted in operative position, each product chute has a substantially common axial centerline in cooperating alignment with the clipper mechanism.

68. (New) A method according to Claim 67, wherein one of the product chutes has a substantially pentagonal cross sectional configuration, another of the product chutes has a substantially oval cross-sectional configuration, and another of the product chutes has a substantially planar floor with a curvilinear upper portion.

69 (New) A packaging system, comprising:

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a plurality of interchangeable elongate product chutes, each chute having an outer wall, opposing receiving and discharge end portions, and an interior generally straight cavity extending therethrough, with at least one of the chute cavities has a non-circular cross-sectional shape, and wherein at least some of the chutes have a different size and/or shape from that of the others;

a frame configured to serially releasably mount the interchangeable product chutes, wherein each of the plurality of interchangeable chutes have substantially the same axially extending centerline when mounted to the frame; and

a clipper mechanism disposed downstream of the product chute, the clipper mechanism configured to apply at least one clip to a covering material that resides over and encloses a product discharged from the mounted product chute.

70. (New) A packaging system according to Claim 69, wherein each of the interchangeable product chutes has a mounting bracket attached to a lower portion thereof.

71. (New) A packaging system according to Claim 70, wherein the mounting brackets each comprise an electronic member that cooperates with a component on the frame to automatically electronically inhibit operation of the clipper when a mounted chute is not in proper operative position.

72. (New) A packaging system according to Claim 70, wherein some of the product chutes have a mounting bracket with a first configuration and some of the product chutes have a mounting bracket with a second different configuration.

73. (New) A packaging system according to Claim 72, wherein the first configuration has an uppermost laterally extending portion with a generally concave recess that receives a lower portion of the respective chute therein, and wherein the second configuration has a generally planar uppermost portion that merges into a downwardly extending member, the downwardly extending member having a width that is less than a width of the planar portion.

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74. (New) A system according to Claim 71, wherein the mounting bracket sensors comprise one component of a two-part magnetic switch, and wherein the other component of the two-part magnetic switch resides on the frame.